

The logo consists of the letters 'TN' in white, bold, sans-serif font, centered within a red square. Below the square is a thin blue horizontal line.

**TN**

**OFFICE OF SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES**

A black and white photograph showing a person's hands sorting through various pieces of waste, including plastic bottles and crumpled paper, into different bins. The person is wearing a striped shirt. The background is a blurred pile of waste.

# **HOW TO CONDUCT A WASTE AUDIT**

**Determine the volume of waste you could be diverting through source reduction, recycling, and composting.**

# BEFORE YOU BEGIN

## *Preparation*

- Determine sorting location
- Prepare maintenance staff for altered daily routine and tasks. Maintenance staff will bring waste bags to sorting area instead of to dumpsters.
- Signed liability waivers for all team/sorting members
- Agreement with recycling/organics facility(ies) to accept sorted recyclable items

## *Needed Items*

- Sorting Containers
- Trash bag liners
- Scale
- Sorting table(s)
- Water-resistant tarp or tablecloth
- PPE:
  - Tyvek/Bibs/Aprons
  - Thick rubber gloves, or latex gloves with puncture resistant outer gloves

## *Helpful Tips:*

- Generally a waste audit should be conducted for a period of time as opposed to one individual occurrence. Most accurate data is collected from a period of a week or full operating term to capture fluctuations in waste generation.
- Be sure to know your current waste volume so that you can choose appropriately sized bag liners and sorting containers.
- Plan to take sorted items to local curbside locations or partner with local entities to ensure all items are properly disposed of after sorting.
- For additional tips, watch this step-by-step [video](#).

# CONDUCTING THE AUDIT

## *Step 1: Determine Waste Categories*

Using the below waste categories, choose and appropriately label sorting containers to be used. Only label applicable categories for your business.

1. **Paper** – Newsprint, Office Paper, Magazines/Catalogs, Uncoated OCC, Kraft, Boxboard, Mixed Paper, Milk and Juice Cartons/Boxes, Other Paper; \*contaminated paper logged under organics
2. **Plastic** - #1 PET Bottles/Jars/Containers/Packaging, #2 HDPE Bottles/Jars/Containers/Packaging, #6 Expanded Polystyrene Packaging (EPS), #3-#7 Plastic Products, Grocery & Merchandise Bags, Trash Bags, Commercial & Industrial Film, Other Film, Composite Plastic;
3. **Glass** – Recyclable clear, brown, green, and blue Glass Bottles and Jars, Flat Glass, Other Glass;
4. **Metal** – Aluminum Beverage Containers, Ferrous containers (tin cans), Aerosol cans, Ferrous, Non-Ferrous, Other Metal;
5. **Organics** – Yard Waste, Food Scraps, Bottom Fines and Dirt, Contaminated Paper, Other Organics;
6. **C&D** – Clean Dimensional Lumber, Clean Engineered Wood, Wood Pallets, Painted Wood, Treated Wood, Concrete, Reinforced Concrete, Asphalt Paving, Rock & Other Aggregates, Bricks, Gypsum Board, Composition Shingles, Other Roofing, Plastic C&D materials, Ceramics/Porcelain, Other C&D;
7. **Misc./Inorganics** – Televisions, Computer Monitors, Computer Equipment/ Peripherals, Electronic Equipment, White Goods, Lead-acid Batteries, Other Household Batteries, Tires, Household Bulky Items, Fluorescent Lights/Ballasts;
8. **HHW** – Latex Paint, Oil Paint, Plant/Organism/Pest Control/Growth, Used Oil/Filters, Other Automotive Fluids, Mercury-Containing Items, Sharps & Infectious Waste, Ash, Sludge, & Other Industrial Processed Wastes, Sewage Solids, Other HHW

## *Step 2: Team Training Session*

Assemble your waste audit team of employees and/or volunteers that will be conducting the sorting. Identify a field supervisor to oversee all sorting activities and ensure health and safety of team. Training for sorting team should include:

- Purpose for Waste Characterization Study
- Sampling and Sorting Procedures
- Health and Safety Plan

## *Step 3: Sort Materials*

Have your team place waste on tarped sorting table and sort materials into the appropriately labeled containers. Sorted items are placed into labeled containers by material type.

Rejecting a Sample - The field supervisor will be responsible for determining if samples are potentially hazardous. Samples will be rejected if they: contain potentially infectious hospital or medical waste; are soaked in a liquid other than water; contain unidentifiable contents; contain hazardous waste or materials posing a safety hazard; or have an unusual odor not like other solid waste. If such a load is identified, it will be reported to the field supervisor for removal from the sorting area.

## *Step 4: Record Data*

Record the weight and/or volume of each category of waste following the sorting of materials. If weighing waste in containers, be sure to weigh empty container prior and subtract from total to get an accurate weight. Use this data to determine which types of waste your business or organization generates the most of and should be the focus of your waste reduction efforts moving forward.